

GUIDELINES FOR THE REMOVAL OF STREAM FLOW OBSTRUCTIONS

A stream channel filled with sand, gravel or sediment is a common problem in Kentucky; it is the result of over a century of disturbances within our watersheds. Removal of these materials will not address the causes of sediment and gravel problems within the stream and is not a long-term solution. Investigating and eliminating the cause of sediment and gravel sources will be the most effective way to address sediment and gravel deposition problems. Mechanically removing this material is only a temporary fix. Improper or excessive removal of material from a stream may create stream channel and economic problems for upstream and/or downstream landowners. In-stream activities that significantly increase sedimentation or alter stream flow are violations of state water quality standards and may be subject to enforcement action. Adherence to the following guidelines will exempt you from the Water Quality Certification process:

- Material should be removed using the “one-step removal” process. The one step removal process involves lifting material from the stream and placing it outside of the stream channel. Material should never be stockpiled within the stream channel. Stockpiling material in the floodplain may require a permit from the Water Resources Branch of the Kentucky Division of Water. The work area should be smoothed over at the end of each work day.
- Backhoes and front-end loaders, which can scoop material out of the channel, are preferred for this type of work. Bulldozers, which push the material, will not be allowed within the stream as they cause unnecessary disturbance to the stream channel.
- Avoid using vehicles within the stream channel. Removal of materials should be conducted away from the flowing portion of the stream and when possible all work should be done from the bank of the stream.
- The Division of Water strongly advises against the removal of tree vegetation from streambanks whenever it is proposed as an answer to flooding or solid waste management. The removal of trees and their root systems will destabilize the streambanks and result in severe streambank erosion problems with resulting water quality problems.
- Removal of materials should be conducted only during low-flow periods, generally late summer or fall.
- Removal of materials should not be conducted during the fish-spawning season (April 15th to June 15th).
- When excavating gravel bars, only the material more than 12 inches above the normal water elevation should be removed
- Do not push stream gravel up against the sides of the stream in an attempt to stabilize the stream bank or for any other reason. This material is easily eroded and will soon be washed away causing problems for a downstream neighbor. Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can provide you with effective stream-bank stabilization techniques.